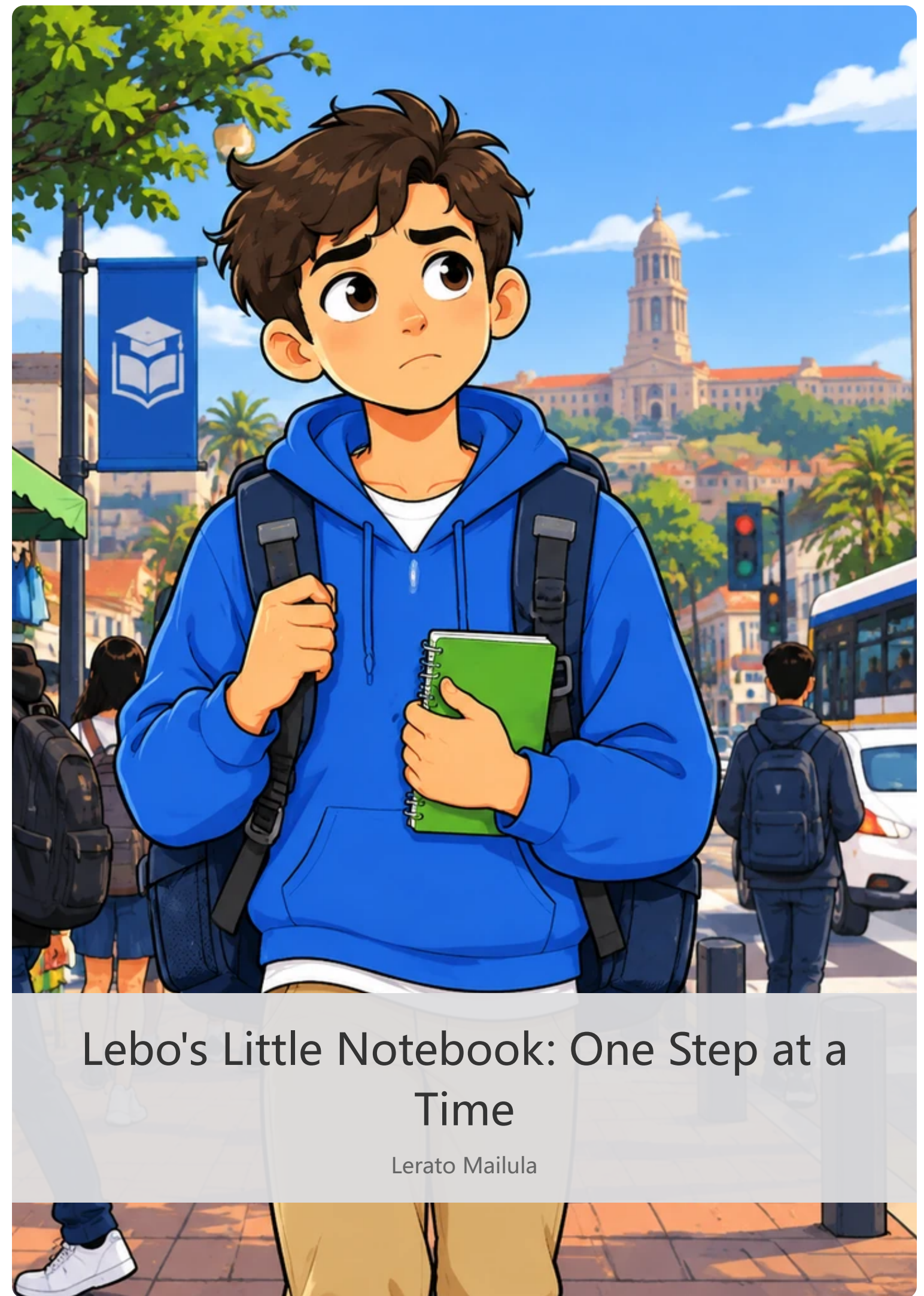




Lebo's Little Notebook: One Step at a Time

Lerato Mailula



Lebo sat at the kitchen table, staring at a pile of heavy textbooks. The upcoming end-of-year exams felt like a giant wall impossible to climb. Tapping a pencil against a tiny green notebook, Lebo wrote down a question: Why does tomorrow feel so heavy today?



The morning walk through Hatfield was always loud and fast. Minibus taxis honked at busy intersections, and vibrant shopfronts blared upbeat music into the sunny air. Lebo walked past energetic university students chatting outside bright cafes, feeling small and overwhelmed.



At a crowded crosswalk near the train station, street vendors called out and neon signs flashed continuously. The sheer pace of the city made it hard to keep focused on school goals. Lebo stopped at the curb, took a deep breath, and quietly remembered: "One step at a time, I can get there."



Inside the school gates, classmates gathered in the courtyard to discuss mock exam scores and big university applications. Lebo clutched the small notebook tightly, feeling a sudden wave of self-doubt. The pressure to succeed felt heavier than the backpack resting on Lebo's shoulders.



During afternoon study hall, Mr. Khumalo filled the whiteboard with complex physics formulas. The numbers and symbols looked like an impossible puzzle, making Lebo feel completely stuck. Frustration built up, tempting Lebo to close the textbook and give up for the day.



Lebo looked around the bright classroom and noticed that other learners were also staring in confusion. A classmate named Aphiwe pulled a chair closer, while Thabo turned around with a worn notebook. Aphiwe smiled encouragingly and said that nobody had to solve the hard problem alone.



The small group began breaking the complex problem into tiny, manageable parts. They asked questions, sketched simple diagrams, and laughed through their initial mistakes. Working together made the intimidating task feel much lighter and far more interesting.



When Lebo finally calculated the correct answer, the whole group cheered in quiet victory. Lebo opened the tiny notebook to write down what had just happened. Lebo wrote in bold letters: "One step at a time, I can get there."



The walk home through Hatfield felt completely different under the warm afternoon light. The bustling streets were still loud and full of energy, but Lebo no longer felt lost among the crowd. A clear sense of purpose made every step feel lighter and stronger.



That evening, Lebo opened the green notebook to write one final question for the day: What exciting challenge will I tackle tomorrow? Lebo closed the book with a confident smile, knowing that “One step at a time, I can get there.”